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Production of Honey with a Potential for Geographical Indications Labeling as a Bee Conservation Tool

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Abstract

The Kenya Vision 2030 and the Agricultural Sector Development Strategy identifies agriculture as a key sector to enhance economic growth, ensure food and nutritional security while contributing to environmental sustainability. Protecting a product with Geographical Indications (GIs) boosts farmers' incomes through improved price premiums and market access and it is also important in biodiversity protection. In Kenya, bees' diversity, abundance and activity density have been reported to be low, locally affecting pollination of important food crops. A study was thus carried out in Kitui, Baringo and West Pokot Counties in Kenya to assess how bees' conservation and pollination services can be enhanced through production of quality honey with GIs potential. This study will inform and support the GIs Bill in Kenya which is awaiting enactment and also it will inform the debate on the development of a pollination policy in Kenya. Data was collected through six Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews with 15 honey producers and additional key stakeholders in the honey sector. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and graphs were used to present the results. Results indicated that most of the honey producers practice organic agriculture and they conserve particular plants with nectar that is known to produce high quality honeys that qualify as potential GIs. These plants also provide pollen for the brood and they also act as habitats for bees and other pollinators. Production of potential GI honey can thus be a tool to enhance conservation of bees. There is need to; inform and capacity build honey producers about the benefits and consequences of GIs; improve institutional capacity to ensure protection of honeys with a potential for GI labelling; create a regulatory framework for GIs products and improve market infrastructure for honey marketing.

Keywords: Bees, conservation, geographical indication, honey, Kenya, pollination